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World Summit on Sustainable Development and its possible implications for the work of the Statistical Commission

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

The present note was prepared at the request of the Economic and Social Council. It contains a summary of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, with special emphasis on their statistical implications.

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I. Main outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development

1. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, reaffirmed the commitment to the Rio principles and the full implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21. The Summit declared its commitment to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences held and international agreements reached since 1992.

2. The Summit reaffirmed sustainable development as a central element of the international agenda. The understanding of sustainable development was broadened, in particular the linkages between poverty, the environment and the use of natural resources. Poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and the protection and management of the natural resource base of economic and social development are overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development.

3. There were three specific outcomes of the Summit:

(a) The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development,[1] in which heads of State and Government committed themselves to taking the action needed to make sustainable development a reality;

(b) The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development,[2] negotiated by Governments, which sets out in more detail the action that needs to be taken in specific areas;

(c) Commitments by Governments and other stakeholders to a broad range of partnership activities and initiatives that will implement sustainable development at the national, regional and international levels.

4. Governments established some important new targets, such as to halve the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015; to use and produce chemicals by 2020 in ways that do not lead to significant adverse effects on human health and the environment; to maintain or restore depleted fish stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield on an urgent basis and where possible by 2015; and to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity. The annex to the present note contains the key commitments, targets and timetable from the Plan of Implementation.

5. Following decisions made at the Summit, the Commission on Sustainable Development will have an enhanced role in respect of reviewing and monitoring progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and fostering the coherence of implementation, initiatives and partnerships.

II. Implications for the work of the Statistical Commission

A. Integrated environmental and economic accounting

6. The Summit reaffirmed the need for integrated information about economic, social and environmental dimensions. The System of Integrated Environmental and

Economic Accounting (SEEA) provides an integrated framework to measure the integration between the economy and the environment, thus providing a tool for better monitoring progress towards meeting environmental goals, assessing alternative developing strategies and designing environmental policy instruments. Agenda 21 already called for the implementation of SEEA in all countries at the earliest date. SEEA has now been revised, in collaboration with the London Group on Natural Resources Accounting, to reflect the development in methodology and practical implementation that has occurred since 1993. It is being published jointly by the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Statistical Office of the European Communities and the World Bank. The United Nations Statistics Division is currently involved in the preparation of handbooks on specific resources (e.g., water and fish) and will focus its efforts on the implementation of SEEA in developing countries.

B. Environmental statistics and indicators

7. The Plan of Implementation defines the need for the development of environment statistics and indicators at the national, regional and international levels. The report of the Secretary-General on environment statistics and environmental accounting (E/CN.3/2003/19) provides a summary of activities and plans in this field, with a focus on the improvement of regular reporting, methodological development, and training and capacity-building. Further analysis of the new targets of the Summit may reveal a need for statistics in areas that are not yet covered by the programme. The significance of capacity-building at the national and regional levels, the need for streamlining international data demands, as well as the need for the development of standard methodologies in this area, calls for strengthened collaboration among the international organizations engaged in environment statistics and information.

C. Harmonization of development indicators

8. The tasks of the Standing Advisory Committee on Development Indicators are, inter alia, to maintain the framework of development indicators and establish new indicators in response to future United Nations conferences and summits (see E/CN.3/2003/21). It is, therefore, suggested that the Committee work in close cooperation with experts of the Commission on Sustainable Development to technically review proposed follow-up indicators. In particular, it is suggested that the Statistical Commission authorize its Chairman to write a letter to the Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development in order to officially initiate a dialogue between the two Commissions on the development of future indicators.

III. Points for action by the Commission

9. The Commission may wish to comment on the statistical implications of the World Summit on Sustainable Development outlined in the present note.

Notes

[1] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[2] Ibid., resolution 2, annex.

Annex

Key commitments, targets and timetables of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development*

Poverty eradication

Halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than $1 a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger (reaffirmation of the millennium development goals).

By 2020, achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, as proposed in the "Cities without slums" initiative (reaffirmation of millennium development goal).

Establish a world solidarity fund to eradicate poverty and to promote social and human development in the developing countries.

Water and sanitation

Halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water (reaffirmation of millennium development goal).

Halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of people who do not have access to basic sanitation.

Sustainable production and consumption

Encourage and promote the development of a 10-year framework of programmes to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production.

Energy

Renewable energy

Diversify energy supply and substantially increase the global share of renewable energy sources in order to increase its contribution to total energy supply.

Access to energy

Improve access to reliable, affordable, economically viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sound energy services and resources, sufficient to achieve the millennium development goals, including the goal of halving the proportion of people in poverty by 2015.

Energy markets

Remove market distortions, including the restructuring of taxes and the phasing out of harmful subsidies. Support efforts to improve the functioning, transparency and

* This list if not exhaustive, but provides information on the key commitments set out in the Plan of Implementation; for the full text of the Plan, including the exact terms in which these commitments were made, visit the official web site at www.johannesburgsummit.org.

information about energy markets with respect to both supply and demand, with the aims of achieving greater stability and ensuring consumer access to energy services.

Energy efficiency

Establish domestic programmes for energy efficiency, with the support of the international community. Accelerate the development and dissemination of energy efficiency and energy-conservation technologies, including the promotion of research and development.

Chemicals

Aim, by 2020, to use and produce chemicals in ways that do not lead to significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.

Renew the commitment to the sound management of chemicals and of hazardous wastes throughout their life cycle.

Promote the ratification and implementation of relevant international instruments on chemicals and hazardous waste, including the Rotterdam Convention, so that it can enter into force by 2003, and the Stockholm Convention, so that it can enter into force by 2004.

Further develop a strategic approach to international chemicals management, based on the Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action beyond 2000, by 2005.

Encourage States to implement the new globally harmonized system for the classification and labelling of chemicals as soon as possible, with a view to having the system fully operational by 2008.

Management of the natural resource base

Water

Develop integrated water resources management and water-efficiency plans by 2005.

Oceans and fisheries

Encourage the application by 2010 of the ecosystem approach for the sustainable development of the oceans.

On an urgent basis, and where possible by 2015, maintain or restore depleted fish stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield.

Put into effect, by the agreed dates, the FAO international plans of action:

- For the management of fishing capacity by 2005.
- To prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by 2004.

Develop and facilitate the use of diverse approaches and tools, including the ecosystem approach, the elimination of destructive fishing practices and the establishment of marine-protected areas consistent with international law and based on scientific information, including representative networks, by 2012.

Establish by 2004 a regular process under the aegis of the United Nations for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment.

Eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and to overcapacity.

Atmosphere

Facilitate implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer by ensuring adequate replenishment of its fund by 2003/2005.

Improve access by developing countries to alternatives to ozone-depleting substances by 2010, and assist them in complying with the phase-out schedule under the Montréal Protocol.

Biodiversity

Achieve by 2010 a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity.

Forests

Accelerate implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action by countries and by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and intensify efforts on reporting to the United Nations Forum on Forests so as to contribute to an assessment of progress in 2005.

Corporate responsibility

Actively promote corporate responsibility and accountability, including through the full development and effective implementation of intergovernmental agreements and measures, international initiatives and public-private partnerships, and appropriate national regulations.

Health

Enhance health education with the objective of achieving improved health literacy on a global basis by 2010.

Reduce, by 2015, mortality rates for infants and children under 5 by two thirds, and maternal mortality rates by three quarters, of the prevailing rate in 2000 (reaffirmation of millennium development goal).

Reduce HIV prevalence among young men and women aged 15 to 24 by 25 per cent in the most affected countries by 2005 and globally by 2010, as well as combat malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases (reaffirmation of General Assembly resolution).

Sustainable development of small island developing States

Undertake initiatives by 2004 aimed at implementing the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities to reduce, prevent and control waste and pollution and their health-related impacts.

Develop community-based initiatives on sustainable tourism by 2004.

Support the availability of adequate, affordable and environmentally sound energy services for the sustainable development of small island developing States, including through strengthening efforts on energy supply and services, by 2004.

Review implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in 2004.

Sustainable development for Africa

Improve sustainable agricultural productivity and food security in accordance with the millennium development goals, in particular that of halving by 2015 the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

Support African countries in developing and implementing food security strategies by 2005.

Support Africa's efforts to implement the objectives of the New Partnership for African Development on energy, which seek to secure access for at least 35 per cent of the African population within 20 years, especially in rural areas.

Means of implementation

Ensure that, by 2015, all children will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education relevant to national needs (reaffirmation of millennium development goal).

Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 (reaffirmation of the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All).

Recommend to the General Assembly that it consider adopting a decade of education for sustainable development, starting in 2005.

Institutional framework for sustainable development

Adopt new measures to strengthen institutional arrangements for sustainable development at the international, regional and national levels.

Enhance the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development, including through reviewing and monitoring progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and fostering coherence of implementation, initiatives and partnerships.

Facilitate and promote the integration of the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development into the work programmes of the regional commissions.

Establish an effective, transparent and regular inter-agency coordination mechanism on ocean and coastal issues within the United Nations system.

Take immediate steps to make progress in the formulation and elaboration of national strategies for sustainable development and begin their implementation by 2005.